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Lesson Plan for the novel Black & White written by Larry Dane Brimner

The plan is written for middle school age to high school students. It can be adapted to the lower grades, but caution should be taken as the novel itself is quite graphic.

Objective: To give students the opportunity to learn about the civil rights movement while introducing them to two strong and opposing personalities, Reverend Fred Shuttlesworth and Theophilus Eugene “Bull” Connor. Also, the students’ will identify character traits of the Reverend and Bull and transfer the skill of identifying personality traits to them.

Materials: Enough copies of the novel Black and White for students to work in pairs. Also, enough copies of the I am template to write a poem.

Procedure: Introduce the students to Wendell Berry’s quote, “If you don’t know where you are from, you’ll have a hard time saying where you are going.” Have them brainstorm about the importance of understanding one’s roots in order to know their place in the world. Then, introduce them to the I Am poem and read the sample aloud. Assign students into groups of two. They will take turns scanning the book and reading some of the captions under the pictures to get an idea of what character traits can be attributed to Reverend Shuttlesworth and Bull Connor. After giving the students the opportunity to discover the character traits of the two main people in Black & White pass out the Template for an I am poem. Have the students follow the directions to create one of their own.

Assessment: Students will complete a character sketch of themselves using skills learned from the lesson and create an I am poem to be shared with the class.